

March 7, 2018

My name is Joanne Colwick and I am a resident of Lebanon, Connecticut. I am writing in support of HB 5372 An Act Concerning Dyslexia Instruction Offered in Teacher Preparation Programs.

I am a professional Educational Therapist and have been instructing students with dyslexia for the past eighteen years. I am an Orton-Gillingham Multisensory Structured Language Practitioner. I received my training over a three year period which consisted of 160 hours of coursework and 300 hours of supervision by an Orton-Gillingham Fellow.

The majority of my students over the years have been public school students. I am hired by the public school to provide instruction in structured literacy that is vital to the success of a student who is diagnosed with dyslexia.

In my years as an educational therapist, I have only encountered a handful of school systems that have teachers trained to deliver systematic, explicit instruction in the structure of language to dyslexic students. I have found that many school systems have trained teachers in an overview or introductory course in structured literacy, but do not finance the supervisory and practicum hours that are so important. These well meaning but under trained teachers do not have sufficient knowledge or skills to address the needs of a student with dyslexia. Valuable time is lost as dyslexic students continue to fall behind their peers.

I strongly support legislation that would require teacher training programs to include substantial instruction in structured literacy programs as described in HB5372. In my opinion, this should be required of all college level students who are working towards special education or remedial reading certification. This would save towns the financial burden of training teachers after they are hired. It would also be more cost effective than hiring private therapists to deliver the instruction.

Also included in HB5372 is the establishment of a Dyslexia Instruction Standards and Accountability Council. I strongly support this provision as it would ensure that all dyslexia legislation is being implemented consistently within our Institutions of Higher Education.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony.

Joanne Colwick
Educational Therapist